

Leisure

JOHN R. KELLY



T H I R D E D I T I O N

third edition

Leisure

John R. Kelly

University of Illinois

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Preface

This book will not answer all your questions about leisure. It is an introduction to the study of leisure, but not an encyclopedia of all we know about the subject. However, it is intended to raise the most important issues. There is much that we don't know about the history of leisure and about its contemporary manifestations. But we are coming to know what the issues are and how we can approach them. New voices raise different issues and offer new perspectives. The primary aim of this book is to bring the reader into an engagement with both the known and the unknown about the human phenomenon we call *leisure*.

Knowledge is always based on some kind of research. Investigation may be formal or informal, systematic or haphazard, cumulative or novel. In the past four decades we have learned a good deal about leisure that was only guessed at before. And every new discovery leads to another set of issues that calls for investigation. We are always in the process of learning.

This book is not a collection of research reports. No attempt is made to summarize or even refer to every worthwhile study in the field. However, it is based on the developing body of knowledge in Leisure Studies. This text demonstrates that Leisure Studies is a field based in research that connects with recognized theory and research in social studies and the humanities and has both significance and integrity. Further, it is an attempt to provide some shape and structure to that knowledge. Historians, philosophers, economists, sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists have applied their scholarly tools to leisure. In Leisure Studies, it is time to try to integrate their discoveries into a coherent approach.

Whenever a new approach to understanding something like leisure is developed, much of the old and accepted "conventional wisdom" is challenged. It is found that some ideas that have been taken for granted do not stand up under new scrutiny or the passage of time. Some of what made sense in 1950 has collapsed under the pressure of unanticipated social change. Nevertheless, we have to do our best to understand every important aspect of our lives in our time.

One way of doing this is to allow people to tell their stories. Considerable material in this book comes from various attempts to encourage, record, and interpret the stories that a wide variety of persons have told about their leisure and its meanings for them. We also have considerable quantitative information gathered in surveys and government reports and

computer-analyzed to aid our comprehension. A number of methods have been developed that add to the richness of a class or discussion group by stimulating participants to tell their stories and to gain further understanding from the analysis of experiences available to them. The discussion questions for each chapter are intended to help a group using this book to be knowledge producers as well as learners.

Approach

A comprehensive approach: *Leisure, 3/e* integrates history, current data and trends, a variety of conceptual approaches, critical perspectives to stimulate discussion, and full attention to the kinds of things that people do along with where and how they do them. This text provides a basis for classroom discussion and frees the instructor to concentrate on the issues and materials of greatest interest to the particular class. This inclusion allows the instructor to select emphases and focus on issues. I have made no attempt to disguise the premises that have guided my own study of leisure. Among them are some assumptions that are not shared by all interested in leisure. Leisure is understood here as a central element in being human. It is not peripheral or separate from the rest of life's meanings and relationships. In fact, leisure may be crucial to our personal and social development and to our concepts of ourselves and the world around us. Leisure is, after all, learned behavior. Its forms and content are a part of our culture and are transmitted in social contexts. As a consequence, we will have to examine much more than games and activities to begin to comprehend the significance of leisure in contemporary life. Leisure is thoroughly social.

Leisure is not only central and socially learned; it also involves meaning and action. The abiding theme of every leisure philosophy is freedom. Freedom means more than lack of constraint. Freedom is the possibility of self-determining action. In the incredible variety of what people do as leisure, there is a dimension of meaning. Therefore, a recurring question in trying to understand leisure in any culture is Why? How do people make choices, and what seems to be their consequences?

There are several limitations to this book. One, of course, is the author. As a sociologist with some background in philosophy, social psychology, and other social sciences, and with experience as a professional participant-observer in more than a dozen communities from New York to California, my background is broad but still limited. Even though considerable research has been done in Europe that has informed American scholars, for the most part this book concentrates on leisure in North America. Further, although almost every chapter includes several references to sources and publications that deal with the related issues, as an introduction this book is not all-inclusive. Rather, the philosophy and research considered most relevant and productive have been selected as a beginning. Many issues and agendas are suggested for further investigation.

New to this Edition:

- **Gender throughout the text:** Issues related to gender and the meanings and conditions of leisure for women—past and present—are woven through most chapters rather than limited to a single chapter. What does it mean to seek leisure in a sexist society? How

- has the study of and by women required reformulations of agendas and theoretical approaches? How do women “compose” their lives in the midst of a “stalled revolution”?
- **Leisure diversity in a multicultural society:** The study of leisure is beginning to expand its scope to recognize that “minorities” are becoming majorities in many American social worlds. Issues related to racial, ethnic, and social class diversity are combined with attention to gender and sexual orientation. What are the new agendas and issues provoked by this recognition of diversity? A new chapter (5) focusing on such diversity is augmented by the introduction of such issues throughout the text. The fundamental issue concerns the meaning of leisure in a society that is both inclusive and diverse.
 - **Leisure as a political issue:** The thoroughly political nature of leisure is examined in a new chapter (6) as well as in the historical section. The allocation of resources is political as well as economic as demonstrated by debates over the environment. Issues of privilege and social control are balanced with analysis of the taken-for-granted political support and limitations of contemporary leisure and recreation.
 - **Leisure in the marketplace:** Expanding on the 2nd edition’s chapter on leisure as business, the 3rd edition analyzes what it means for 97 percent of leisure-related spending to be in the market sector. What are the aims of leisure businesses? Is leisure becoming more and more consumption of marketed commodities rather than action and interaction? Are there economic imperatives in a market economy that are shaping the nature of contemporary leisure?
 - **Twentieth-century history:** The historical analyses from Greece, Rome, and western history are compressed in order to expand on technological change, the new metropolis and its suburbs, and the impacts of mass media and culture. Roots of social division and sources of contemporary culture are examined more fully.
 - **History and contemporary issues:** Still the only text with more than a nod to history, *Leisure*, 3/e recasts the historical chapters to prompt discussion of implications in current leisure practices.
 - **Sexuality in society:** The chapter on sexuality (22) is revised to introduce issues beyond sex-role socialization. The significance of sexuality for leisure is approached as pervasive rather than as a separate issue or as limited to sexual identification. The multiple meanings of “family” are placed in a focus on the centrality of primary relationships for leisure.
 - **Aging and the life course:** Issues raised by social gerontologists in the author’s recent book on activity and aging are used to give greater attention to this growing segment of the population. What are the continuities and changes in later life that impact patterns and meanings of activity? The chapter on the life course (4) now gives aging attention equal to youth and the middle years.
 - **Mass media and popular culture:** The chapter on popular culture (16) is revised to give greater attention to the significance of mass media, new electronic developments, and the diversity of cultural styles. The dominance of television in non-work time allocation is central to understanding contemporary leisure styles and meanings.
 - **The nature of leisure:** The classic analysis of definitional and theoretical approaches to leisure is revised to include a focus on such concepts as “flow,” “creativity,” and “existential” life-development. Further, the integrated approach avoids a tedious listing of individual studies, yet is based in research and theory.

Acknowledgments

During the years that the first two editions of *Leisure* have been used by colleges and universities from Maine to California and from Nova Scotia to New South Wales, I have received useful comments and suggestions from many faculty and not a few students. Many have been incorporated into this third edition. Also, I have learned more about leisure through research and exchange with colleagues throughout the world in the fourteen years since the first edition of *Leisure* was written. The content, order, and presentation ought to be considerably improved. I would like to thank and acknowledge those reviewers who provided feedback and suggestions for the 3rd edition. They are: James Bristor, Michigan State University; John R. Brouillette, Colorado State University; Frances C. Cannon, Florida State University; Craig Finney, California State University at Northridge; Donald V. Joyce, retired, Pennsylvania State University; Jean Keller, University of North Texas; Dennis Nelson, Utah State University; Steven Philipp, University of West Florida. I hope that I will continue to receive feedback from those who read and use this third edition.

The intent, then, is to raise important issues rather than to close them. Science, after all, is a process of learning and communication, not a body of facts. In the end, this book is an invitation to join in that process of learning as well as to engage in the full potential of leisure and of life.

Two chapters of the second edition are based on writings that I have published elsewhere. I am grateful to Venture Publishing for permission to use "Sources of Leisure Styles" (Chapter 3), which is revised from Thomas A. Goodale and Peter A. Witt, eds., *Recreation and Leisure: Issues in an Era of Change*, revised edition, 1985. Chapter 24, on theories of leisure, is based on my book *Freedom to Be: A New Sociology of Leisure* (Macmillan, 1987).

Thanks could be given so many colleagues and associates that the list would be almost endless. The Department of Leisure Studies at the University of Illinois has supported my work for more than nineteen years now. My colleagues there have always been a source of understanding and insight. My work with the World Leisure and Recreation Association and the Research Committee on Leisure of the International Sociological Association has brought me into association and exchange with scholars from around the world who have enriched my thinking in countless ways. Any book such as this one is built on the contributions of many others, acknowledged and unacknowledged. To them all I am grateful for the opportunity to join with them in the ongoing development of the important field of Leisure Studies. Finally, I continue to learn from my wife, Ruth, and my daughters and colleagues, Dr. Susan Kelly of Stanford University and Dr. Janice Kelly of Purdue University.

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Section I

Contemporary Leisure: People and Resources

What do we need to know in order to begin to understand leisure in our world today?

If leisure is personal freedom, expression, and self-development, then we need to know about individual people. We need to have some grasp of how they learn, how they communicate, how they take action, and how they define themselves.

If leisure is social interaction, relationships, and the expression of community, then we need to know about stability and change in social contexts, about groups, normative expectations, self-presentations, the regularities of institutions, and the meanings of life together.

If leisure takes place in time and space, then we need to know about personal timetables, the interrelation of social schedules, and the ecology of leisure behavior, both indoor and outdoor.

If leisure patterns change with the rest of the society, we need to know as much as possible about what is going on in our society—about population shifts, economic and political change and conflicts, value orientations, group identifications, composite life styles, and new technologies.

The intent of this first section of *Leisure* is to bring insights from a variety of sources and disciplines into a focus on leisure. The material is selected to form a coherent introduction to the behavior and meanings that we call *leisure*.

Chapter 1

The World of Leisure

What is leisure?

Why study leisure?

How can leisure fulfill its potential to meet human needs?

The first question is both simple and complex. *Leisure* is defined in this introductory level as *activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction*. Yet, even with such simplicity, the variety of activity that may be leisure is staggering. There is no list of even a thousand and one activities that encompasses all leisure. It may be that there is no time and no place in which leisure is completely impossible. When leisure is defined as a quality of experience and as the meaning of activity, then it may be almost anything, anywhere, and anytime for someone. The simple definition leads to a vast panorama of human activity.

Reasons for studying leisure may be both qualitative and quantitative. On the one hand, leisure is very important to most people. In fact, there is evidence that leisure may be becoming more and more important in our lives. On the other hand, the scope of leisure is also vast in terms of the use of time, the expenditure of financial resources, and its relationship to home, family, and community.

So the importance of leisure to people and the scope of leisure in the society lead us to the third question about how the potential of leisure can be fulfilled in the lives of human beings. And that is really what this book is all about.

ISSUES

What is the scope of leisure in contemporary society?

What kinds of leisure are most important to people?

Is leisure a set of special activities that fill leftover time?

Is it important to study leisure?

- * The electrician and his wife, a part-time secretary, have the trailer hitched to their pickup, the boat on top, and food and clothing carefully packed. They crisscross the still-dark streets of their community and slip onto the freeway headed north. Both sigh deeply. For the next three weeks they will camp, fish, boat, relax, talk, and visit relatives in the Pacific Northwest. Hot, crowded, and busy Los Angeles is left behind for an interval of carefully numbered days of green forests, cool lakes, struggling fish, and quiet conversation. This trip, like last year's, has been planned and anticipated for eleven months.
- * Her children in school and outlines made for the afternoon's series of piano lessons with grudging children, the thirty-year-old wife-mother-homemaker-piano teacher sits before the piano. As her fingers quickly and competently trace the counter-melodies of a Bach prelude, her mind recalls with still-warm pleasure the praise of her university teacher when she first played the same piece flawlessly before a class of peers.
- * Home from the plant where he has put in another eight hours in which his now-automated set of lathes perform the same operation every 6.42 minutes, the machinist hurries through his supper. In the basement is his own lathe—small, simple, and yet precise—at which he hopes to complete the piston rods for a small engine he has been building for almost a month in his free time. When completed, the engine will be run awhile, shown to approving friends, and perhaps placed on a shelf to be given someday to a yet-unborn grandson.
- * A young art editor hurries from her office an hour before noon. At eleven-thirty she will meet three friends for an hour of doubles in an old armory converted to a downtown tennis club. By one o'clock she will be back at her desk, where she will remain until at least seven to meet another deadline.
- * With the children departed from the table for their homework hour, two people who have been married to each other for sixteen years are talking for the only time that day. Not just announcements and requests, the morning conversational fare, but feelings and memories fill the half-hour over the last of the coffee.
- * The noise and dust of the Ford assembly plant are repressed but not forgotten as the worker drops heavily into "his" chair, snaps the remote control of the color television set, and begins to tilt his first can of beer. The yard can wait until the weekend.
- * Wife, children, and dog are all in the station wagon as the husband-father-bank teller backs out of the driveway. The Wisconsin landscape is not spectacular, but the fields punctuated by white houses and red barns, the spots of woods, and the first hints of fall color will keep all eyes engaged on this Sunday afternoon drive. The power of the car and the two-laned vista of secondary road give them a sense that they are going somewhere together.
- * In the gray light of early morning, a man and a woman reach toward each other, mold their bodies together, and hold each other in silence. Remembered for the moment is the rush of